R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 290 UD 003 673

THE BLOOMINGDALE PROJECT, REPORT OF A DEMONSTRATION ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAM.

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PUB DATE 1 NOV 64

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.84 21P.

DESCRIPTORS- *DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS, *ON THE JOB TRAINING, *YOUTH *UNEMPLOYED, DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, LOWER CLASS, *DROPOUTS, OFFICE OCCUPATIONS, DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION, JOB APPLICATION, JOB MARKET, JOB PLACEMENT, JOB SKILLS, SUPERVISION, ROLE PLAYING, MOBILIZATION FOR YOUTH (MFY), BLOOMINGDALE'S DEPARTMENT STORE, NEW YORK CITY

AN EXPERIMENTAL TRAINING PROGRAM TESTED TWO HYPOTHESES--(1) UNEMPLOYED MINORITY GROUP YOUTH WITH TRAINING AND REINFORCEMENT COULD SUCCEED IN JOBS IN MIDDLE-CLASS SETTINGS AND (2) HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WOULD BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN DROPOUTS IN COMPETING FOR JOBS, BUT DROPOUTS ALSO WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE TRAINING PROGRAM. IN NEW YORK CITY, MOBILIZATION FOR YOUTH (MFY), BLOOMINGDALE'S DEPARTMENT STORE, AND A LOCAL UNION COOPERATED IN THIS PROJECT FOR 29 YOUNG PEOPLE, AGED 17 TO 22, WHO WERE LITERATE AT THE SEVENTH-GRADE LEVEL. A 3-MONTH TRAINING PERIOD CONSISTED OF ORIENTATION TO DEPARTMENT STORE WORK, SPECIFIC FORMAL SKILL TRAINING, AND DIRECT SUPERVISION BY A MFY STAFF MEMBER WHO HAD SUPPORTIVE, COUNSELING, AND LIAISON FUNCTIONS. ORIENTATION MEETINGS INCLUDED ROLE PLAYING AND INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO ACT WHILE APPLYING FOR A JOB. ONE IMPORTANT FEATURE OF THE PROJECT IS ITS SALARY-SHARING PLAN--ONE HALF PAID BY MFY, THE OTHER HALF BY THE STORE. THIS SCHEME HELPS TO OPEN UP THE JOB MARKET FOR MFY'S PROGRAM AND ENABLES MFY TO ACT AS A BARGAINING AGENT. THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT WAS SHOWN BY FOLLOWUP FIGURES--(1) 14 OF THE ULTIMATE TRAINEES WERE REGULARLY EMPLOYED 6 MONTHS LATER AND (2) AMONG DROPOUTS, ONLY ONE PERSON WHO WANTED A JOB WAS UNEMPLOYED. THE SIX TRAINEES WHO WERE SCHOOL DROPOUTS AND WHO WOULD NOT NORMALLY HAVE QUALIFIED FOR JOBS WERE EITHER WORKING OR BACK IN SCHOOL. (NH)

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July 20 1967 Letter sent SG

AE 03673

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THE BLOOMINGDALE PROJECT

Report of a Demonstration On-the-Job Training Program

November 1, 1964

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"We must find ways of expanding opportunities for young people in the lower strata of society" and further, "we emphasize the fact that merely providing new opportunities may not be enough if youngsters are not helped to exploit these opportunities."

Mobilization for Youth Proposal-1962

Opportunities for stable, attractive employment for lower class minority group youth are scarce. Automation and rising standards for blue collar and lower white collar positions further disadvantage the lower class group, many of whom are school drop-outs.

In July, 1964, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz noted that "nearly one to two million job seekers in the 14-19 year old age group are unable to find employment and that one out of every

four Negro youths looking for work is unable to find it." The unemployment rate for this teenage group was 13.1 percent as compared to a rate of 4.8 for the population as a whole.

Heavily subsidized programs such as Mobilization for Youth can create meaningful jobs and teach work skills in the back yards of the underprivileged, but how are lower class youth to compete in the open job market?

In the spring of 1963, an experimental training program was conceived to test the following hypotheses:

1. Minority group youngsters who would not otherwise find jobs could, given the opportunity to work and with the proper training and reinforcement, satisfactorily perform jobs in a middle class setting.

   Youngsters who were high school graduates would have greater success than the school drop-outs in competing for jobs but school drop-outs would demonstrably benefit from this program.

Mobilization for Youth found an ally in the Vice President of Personnel of Bloomingdale's, a fashionable mid-town New York City department store. The local union, District 65, was responsive to the experiment and gave its full cooperation. In the summer of 1963, the program was implemented.

Screening and Selection: Description of the Youngsters in Program

Applicants for the program were recommended by Mobilization for Youth employment and intake counselors. Mobilization for Youth counselors were asked to select literate (seventh grade reading level), reasonably mature youngsters. These youngsters were either in the Mobilization for Youth fully subsidized pre-vocational on-the-job training program or awaiting placement in it, i.e., they had all been deemed either not yet ready to compete for placement in private employment or, if ready, could not find placement on their own.

Of the 29 selected, five were males and 24 were females. Twenty youngsters were Negro, seven were Puerto Rican, and two were White (cf. Appendix Table I).

Fifteen of the youngsters were high school graduates. The other 14 were school drop-outs. There were two seventeen year olds, 14 nineteen year olds, ten twenty year olds, two twenty-one year olds and one twenty-two year old (cf. Appendix Table II).

All the youngsters were interviewed by the personnel staff of Bloomingdale's. Though these were not the toughest of "the hard to reach" youngsters Mobilization for Youth serves, they were all nervous, and despite a week of preparation, most of them froze at their interview. All of these youngsters were literate, all were considered relatively mature, all were eager to participate in the program, many were even high school graduates. Yet, under normal conditions, most of the youngsters would have been disqualified

for employment at Bloomingdale's on the basis of the interviews.

Reaching Objectives: Description of the Program

Three groups of Mobilization for Youth youngsters were enrolled in the three-month training programs during the year-long demonstration. The first group began May 23, 1963 and terminated August 23, 1963; the second began October 10, 1963 and terminated January 10, 1964; and the third group began February 25, 1964 and terminated May 25, 1964.

Each group was subject to a similar program of skills learning and counseling reinforcement.

1. An orientation period prior to employment, delineating all of the requirements for working in a department store. These included: punctuality, attendance, attitudes towards authority, personal grooming, role of the union, and customer relations.
2. During the first week in the store, formal training for the work each trainee was to perform, including the writing of saleschecks, the computation of sales tax, the use of the cash register, the make up of stock orders and the use of the wrapping machine.
3. The direct supervision of a Mobilization for Youth project supervisor who was available to the trainees and store personnel. The Mobilization for Youth supervisor was

responsible for:

a. Regular weekly meetings with trainees to build group strength and support and to deal with general problems.

b. Individual counseling, as needed, as a means of correcting and preventing personal problems.

c. Acting as liaison between the trainees and the supervisory staff of Bloomingdale's.

Orientation Week: The first group of eight received no formal orientation program with Mobilization for Youth. The Bloomingdale's staff did conduct general introductory sessions, but it was observed by the Mobilization for Youth Supervisor that the youngsters needed a preparatory period.

The second and third groups were put on the Mobilization for Youth payroll at $1.00 per hour for one week of orientation, during which the trainees were expected to behave as employees. The work standards of good grooming and punctuality were similar to those they would encounter at Bloomingdale's.

This preparation period was used to overcome individual anxiety by forming the disparate youngsters into a group of mutually supportive trainees, and by addressing the problems which worried them.

The orientation meetings included training in how to make employment tests, how to fill out applications, and how to behave at an employment interview. The interview situations were acted out by the youngsters, who played both the interviewees and interviewers.

This type of role playing enabled youngsters to discuss their past experiences and disappointments and deal with fear of interviews and discrimination. For example, one of the trainees raised the question of letting the store know if you were married and had a baby since many places would not hire young married women with children. Trainees were told that this would not count against them. Several engaged girls expressed relief; they had been told by friends that a number of stores would not hire engaged girls for fear they would marry and leave.

The Mobilization for Youth Work Supervisor: The supervisor was at the department store every day for the first month of each program. She determined the legitimacy of latenesses and absences and helped solve the problems that arose about travelling to work, budgeting time, etc. She met with the group and with the personnel who supervised the trainees on the job. After the initial month, visits to the youngsters on the job were made as required, and meetings with trainees and their supervisors were continued regularly.

Among the problems requiring the supervisor's help were relationships between trainees and store personnel. One difficulty was their inability to understand the roles that different Bloomingdale's staff played in the same department. Lines of authority had to be made explicit to the trainees.

Keeping up the morale of the trainee group was seriously put to the test by the second group. While this group was in training, one

of the girls was picked up by a store detective with a bottle of shampoo in her handbag. Bloomingdale's fired the girl and informed the group, adding that shop lifting was a common phenomenon and in no way reflected on the group as a whole. The group, however, was shaken. It reacted violently against the wayward member and was depressed and embarrassed despite Bloomingdale's "matter of fact" attitude. Constant reassurance from the work supervisor and Bloomingdale's personnel finally quelled the group's misgivings.

Relations with Bloomingdale's: The workings of the program. Mobilization for Youth agreed to pay the salary ($52.50 per week) of all trainees for the first two weeks. For the balance of the three-month period, Bloomingdale's and Mobilization for Youth each paid one-half. This "salary sharing" arrangement has been very successful in opening up the job market in Mobilization for Youth's on-the-job training program. It helps the employers both financially and promotionally, while enabling Mobilization for Youth to act as a bargaining agent to expand job opportunities for groups of youngsters.

The trainees were placed in several departments of the store. The majority of trainees (16) went into clerical employment as PBX operators, typists, unit operators and general clerical workers. The others were either in the stock or wrapping departments. The absence of sales jobs is noticeable. Interestingly, two girls were offered sales jobs and turned them down even though they hoped in

the orientation period to be salespeople. When confronted with the possibility of realizing their wishes, the girls retreated and rationalized, 'ho customer is going to tell us what they want or don't want."

Of the 17 trainees in clerical work, six were not high school graduates. The six would not have been considered for these placements under normal conditions. Seven trainees went into stock work and five went into the wrapping department (cf. Appendix Table III).

When the second group was formed, the store did not know during the orientation week which placements would be available. Most of the youngsters hoped to go into clerical work but when time for placement came, there were not enough openings. There were openings in the wrapping department, Entrance-level jobs, however, are seen punitively by these youngsters and are resented. The reason is that many of these youngsters who are not equipped for higher-level jobs do not grasp the concept of a promotion sequence necessary to justify a low level entrance job. Mobilization for Youth urged the trainees to accept these low-level jobs and tried to get across the notion that one can progress to higher-level jobs through promotions.

Bloomingdale's designated a training person of their own to be available for consultation with the trainees. She kept daily attendance and lateness records and effected transfers for trainees who were unhappy in particular jobs or departments. The managers of the

departments in which trainees worked were informed of the training program. At first, they characterized the youngsters as slow producers and slow learners. Actually, although these youngsters lacked confidence, they were all willing to work and eager to learn. Once they got over the fear of making mistakes and their jobs became routine, they performed well.

The last three weeks of each training program were the most strained. Trainees knew that Bloomingdale's was under no obligation to hire any of them at the end of the training period. There was a great deal of anxiety over "Will I, or won't I get a job?" This underscores a great dilemma facing work training programs - they cannot guarantee employment to youngsters at the conclusion of training.

Results of the Program:

Employment Status at Conclusion of Training Program: Fourteen of the 29 who began the training program were hired by the store. The Mobilization for Youth supervisor reported that three others were not hired because there were no openings for them at the conclusion of the training period. Three youngsters quit; two did not like the work or find it challenging, one left because of "illness" (cf. Appendix Table VII, R.A.). Three youngsters were fired; one of these was addicted to drugs, another was caught shoplifting, and the third did not perform satisfactorily.

The remaining six completed the training period but were not hired for various reasons (cf. Appendix Table IV).

As expected, the high school graduates did much better attaining jobsat Bloomingdale's. Ten of the graduates were hired (67%), while only four of the 14 non-graduates were hired (29%).

It was the impression of the work supervisor that all the trainees in the program were the richer for it. The better grooming of the youngsters and their increased work sophistication were not measured quantitatively but were clearly visible.

Employment Status Three Months After Training: A look at what the 29 youngsters were doing three months after their groups completed the project bears out the work supervisor's impressions.

All trainees: Nineteen of the 29 trainees were in private employment (66%) and two were in MFY projects.

School drop-outs: Five of the 14 (36%) were employed and two others were in MFY training programs.

Twelve of the fourteen trainees who were hired were still at Bloomingdale's. Two had left for better jobs; one was earning $22 a day as a switch tender at a railroad, the other was making $75 a week as a clerical worker. In addition, five youngsters had obtained other jobs by this time. Two trainees were in MFY programs; one had returned to the pre-vocational OJT program and the other had gone into another OJT. Three girls had since been married, of whom one was pregnant and one had a child; all three were no longer interested

in employment. Contact had been lost with two youngsters, one of whom was subsequently reached. One trainee was hospitalized for narcotics addiction, Only two youngsters who desired work were unable to find it (cf. Appendix Table V).

Employment Status Six Months After Training:

All trainees: Six months after their groups completed training (only the first two groups have been out of training for at least six months on October 1, 1964), eight of 24 trainees were still at Bloomingdale's (12 of these had originally been hired) and seven were employed elsewhere in private employment. Thus, 15 of the 24 youngsters (62.5%) were still employed six months after completion of training. One trainee was in school at the time and one was in a MFY project.

School drop-outs: Ten of the 24 trainees who had been out of the program for at least six months were school drop-outs, Four of the ten were in private employment (40%), one was in a MFY work program, and one was back in school full time. ~~One~~ Of the four who were not working, two were homemakers no longer interested in working. Contact had been lost with one youngster and only one was looking for work but unable to find it (cf. Appendix Table VI).

It was mentioned before that six school drop-outs were placed in Bloomingdale's clerical department in jobs for which they would not have normally qualified. Table VII is a brief

resume of the case histories of the six youngsters (cf. Appendix Table VII).

The overall results with these six youngsters are surprisingly good. Two were in fact hired by Bloomingdale's, are still working there, and are thinking of upgrading themselves further. Another youngster who was on court probation returned to pre-vocational MFY training, was placed in a part-time job while continuing at school, and eventually was employed by another department store doing the kind of work for which he was trained in the Bloomingdale project. A fourth trainee quit the program because of the embarrassing disclosure of a previous shoplifting incident but returned to see her MFY supervisor after much solicitation through the mails, was placed on a MFY clerical OJT while finishing high school equivalency courses, is now ready to take the high school equivalency examination, and is still working. Two girls are involved with home problems and are no longer interested in working.

The advantage of having the services of MFY's comprehensive work programs at an employment counselor's disposal are illustrated by two of these cases. After failing at Bloomingdale cases C.E. and R.A. were taken back into MFY subsidized programs, where they received further training and encouragement. One is now employed at another department store and the other has com-

pleted preparation for a high school equivalency test. Special note should be made that these two youngsters had been involved with the law. C.E. is a young man whose reluctance to accept authority and the structure on a job situation is noted repeatedly in the early entries in his case history. Through the opportunities presented to him by MFY and the intercession of a pastor of the church where the youngster was employed, he is now doing well on his job. R.A.'s shoplifting incident was her only record of police involvement. Under usual circumstances she would have lost her job at Bloomingdale's. Embarrassed and anxious, she fled the job despite the reassurance of her work supervisor. For a youngster to have been involved with the law or to have been deeply humiliated when confronted with the fact of the involvement is not uncommon among MFY clients. These are the very young people MFY has proposed to help. Happily, the youngster in question, with extensive encouragement from her supervisor, returned to MFY service and is now doing well.

Conclusion

MFY clearly demonstrated that underprivileged youth, given the opportunity to learn and the encouragement to utilize this opportunity, could be made employable. Nineteen of the 29 trainees (66%) were actually employed three months after the program concluded. Fourteen of 24 trainees (58%) who had been

out of the program six months were regularly employed.

The school drop-outs did demonstrably well. Four of the drop-outs were hired by Bloomingdale's. Six months after the conclusion of the program, four drop-outs were in private employment and one had returned to school. Only one drop-out who wanted to work was not employed.

The most encouraging results were obtained by the six drop-outs who were trained for jobs for which they would normally have not even qualified. Two were hired by Bloomingdale's and are still there, and another is now in a comparable job.

At the close of the project Bloomingdale's expressed the intention to institutionalize the group training experiment through a formal program with public high schools. For Bloomindale's to recognize the practicability - and need - for group training of young people for future employment, and to use the MFY Demonstration Program as a model was a valuable unanticipated outcome of MFY's modest program.

APPENDIX

TABLE I

ETHNICITY AND SEX STATUS OF ENROLLEES

	ETHNICITY			
SEX STATUS	White	Negro	Puerto Rican	Totals:
Male	0	3	2	5
Female	2	17	5	24
Totals:	2	20	7	29

TABLE II

AGE AND LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED OF ENROLLEES

	AGE					
LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED	17	18	19	20	21	22	Totals:
9th Grade	1		2				3
10th Grade				3			3
11th Grade			4	2	1	1	8
H.S. Graduate	1		3	5	1		15
Totals:	2		14	10	2	1	29

TABLE III

TYPE OF JOB AND LAST

SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED

TYPE OF JOB

LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED	Clerical	Stock	Wrapper	Totals:
9th Grade		2	1	3
10th Grade	2	2		4
11th Grade	4		3	7
H.S. Graduate	11	3	1	15
Totals:	17	7	5	29

TABLE IV

PROJECT OUTCOME AND LAST

SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED

	PROJECT OUTCOME	LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED 9th	10th	11th	H.S. Graduate	Totals:
Completed	Hired	1		3	10	14
Project	Not Hired	2	2	1	4	9
Did Not Complete	Quit		1	1	1	3
Project	Fired		1	2		3
	Totals	3	4	7	15	29

TABLE V (ALL GROUPS)

THREE MONTHS AFTER PROGRAM TERMINATION

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED

		LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED				
	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	9th	10th	11th	H.S. Graduate	Totals
Employed	At Bloomingdale's			3	9	12
	Elsewhere	1	1		5	7
In MFY	Pre-Vocational OJT		1			1
	On OJT			1		1
Not Working	Out of Labor Market		1	1	1	3
	Looking for Work	1		1		2
Unknown & Other	Case Closed	1		1		2
	Hospitalized		1			1
	Totals	3	4	7	15	29

TABLE VI (GROUPS I & II)

SIX MONTHS AFTER PROGRAM TERMINATION

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED

		LAST SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED				
	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	9th	10th	11th	H.S. Graduate	Totals
Employed	At Bloomingdale's			1	7	8
	Elsewhere	1	2		4	7
In MFY	Pre-Vocational OJT	1				1
In School	Full time			1		1
Not Working	Out of Labor Market		2		1	3
	Looking for Work			1	1	2
Unknown	Case Closed	1			1	2
	Totals	3	4	3	14	24

TABLE VII

CASE HISTORIES OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS PLACED IN CLERICAL DEPARTMENT

First Group

Case I.D.	First Group Terminated August 23, 1963	3 months later	6 months later	9 months later	Sep. 30 '64 Over one year
C.E. 19 year old Negro Male on Court Probation. 10th grade completed.	Not hired at Bloomingdale's for excessive absences.	In MFY pre-vocation bldg. maintenance project and taking 3 courses at night school.	Clerical job at a local church part time. Still attending school.	Left school and employed full time in a dept. store doing clerical work.	Still at dept. store. Applying for Civil Service IBM examination.
D.G. 20 year old White Female. 10th grade completed.	Not hired at Bloomingdale's. Went into MFY pre-vocational clerical program.	Employed at local service agency doing clerical work.	Discharged from job - lack of interest. Is home caring for sick mother - not interested in work - Case closed.	Case Closed	Case closed.

TABLE VII cont'd

CASE HISTORIES OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS PLACED IN CLERICAL DEPARTMENT

Third Group*

CASE I.D.	Third Group Terminated May 25, 1964	3 months later	Sept. 30. '64 Over 4 months later
J. B. 22 year old Negro Female, 11th grade completed.	Hired by Bloomingdale's.	Still at Bloomingdale's.	Still at Bloomingdale's: Considering secretarial school.
G.C. 19 year old Negro Female, 11th grade completed.	Hired by Bloomingdale's.	Still at Bloomingdale's.	Still at Bloomingdale's: Considering Key Punch training.
M.E. 21 year old Negro Female, 11th grade completed.	Was fired 3/20 for poor performance-was pregnant and had serious marital problems. Lost interest in job, and was no longer interested in working. Case closed.		Case closed.
R.A. 19 year old P. R. Female, 11th grade completed.	Security check disclosed, youngster had shoplifted in another department store a year earlier. This was discussed with her by the MFY Supervisor. She was permitted to stay on the job. Several days later she complained of illness, went home, and neither returned to work nor contacted MFY Supervisor. Saw Supervisor a month later, and talked about her anxiety at Bloomingdale's, after the disclosure of the shoplifting incident. She was put into an MFY clerical OJT and began attending high school equivalency classes at night.	OJT was extended for 3 more months, on 8/1/64.	Still on OJT, and waiting 5 more months to become eligible to take high school equivalency test.

* No dropouts placed in clerical work in Group II.